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'RISON POSIE

By Susan G. Macomber

A PRISON POSIE

BY

SUSAN G. MACOMBER

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No. 1.

PREFACE

My dear Comrades in Shut-in Land—

This little collection of poems were many of them written when I was a so-journer in the land whose shadows now envelop you, and the writing of which for our beloved paper, the Star of Hope,—helped to while away many a sad and lonely hour; and to you and the then editor-in-chief, Sing Sing No. 57355, (whose friendship I greatly prize in this throbbing, rushing world outside the bars) I owe much, because of your kindly sympathy and encouragement.

The flowers in this little posie have been put together with no attempt at grouping or arranging, for my only aim has been to refresh, encourage, inspire and give hope to you, comrades mine, who are toiling up the rough, steep path of life, and to let you know *I never forget you.* For

"If to dream of thee by night and muse on
on thee by day,
If all the worship deep and wild a poet's
heart can pay,
If prayers in absence breathed for thee to
heaven's protecting power,
If winged thoughts that flee to thee, a thousand in an hour,
If busy fancy blending thee with all my future lot,
If this thou call'st forgetting, then indeed,
thou art forgot."

If this, my little posie, which I most lovingly dedicate to you, fulfils this purpose in however slight a degree, its flowers will not have lent their fragrance in vain.

I love you, I believe in you and the wonderful future that shall be yours, and I want you to know the daily inspiration you are to my life.

Many of you are fighting greater battles than could ever be fought on the bloody battlefields of Europe, and in travail of soul and anguish of heart, daily proclaim yourselves victors over self. All honor to you, my dear comrades.

Affectionately,

Your comrade and friend,

SUSAN G. MACOMBER.

Auburn Women's Prison, No. 842

THE JOYS OF A SHUT-IN.

You tell me that my life is done,
But I still feel the rays of the sun
Come stealing thro' my window barred,
Though shadows dark my life have marred.
The twinkling stars seek out me here,
And tell me of a presence near;
Which floods my weary heart with joy,
And brings me peace without alloy.
The moons rays shed their silv'ry light
Across my casement in the night.
The whisp'ring wind up in the trees,
Brings summer's scent with ev'ry breeze;
The thunders roar, the rain-cloud gray,
Drive all my gloomy thoughts away,
For in the glory of the storm
Are happier thoughts of beauty born.
I watch the drops dash 'gainst the pane
And hear sweet music in the rain;
The feathery snow falls fast and white
And on my sill piles in the night.
Jack Frost with delicacy and grace
On the window doth his pictures trace.
The Spring with all its blossoms sweet,
Sends odors fresh my heart to greet;
The green leaves of the ivy vine,
The black bars of my casement twine;
The blackbird calls up in the tree,
While robin answers merrily.
I love them all—for each to me,

Brings joy as if I still were free;
Sometimes I sit and in my dreams
I close my eyes and it almost seems
As if I'd stepped my casement through
With happy heart as I used to do.
Then I hug the trees, kiss the flowers.
As I once did in childhood's hours.
O, comrade, all these joys are thine,
Though shut in iron bars behind.

THE CHRIST CHILD.

Lo, to a manger, meek and lowly,
With the bright star overhead,
Came the Wise Men and the shepherds
By a secret power led.
They were searching for the Christ Child,
That was promised long before;
And they hastened to do homage,
As they knocked upon the door.

Slowly with soft step and cautious,
Entered these three Wise Men in;
Stood before the straw-stuffed manger,
Looked until their eyes grew dim.
Saw the little babe now sleeping,
Gently on his mother's knee;
And they wondered, wondered greatly,
Could this little babe be He?

Swift a glowing light shone o'er Him;
Down they sank upon the floor;
For an angel chorus chanted,
"Praise to Him forever more."
Then these Wise Men scattered incense,
All around that humble place,
While the glory light shone round them,
And illumined every face.

"Peace," the angels voices chanted;
"Glory," came the answer then;
And the Wise Men shouted "Glory"
"Christ has come to earth to men."
Then they took their staves and started
Back to tell their kinsmen all,
Of the "Glory in the highest,"
And the One who could not fall.

BABYLAND.

'Way off in the seas lighted up by the moon,
Is the place where the dear babies grow;
There's where the soft breeze, 'way up in the trees,
Sings the song that the good babies know.

They lie on the ground snuggled close to each other,
And watch for the Stork to pass by;
And they shiver and shake, and their little hearts quake,
As they watch for his ship in the sky.

Then when the skies darken, these babies they harken,
To the wind sighing up in the trees;
And they cry for their mother, and gaze at each other,
And long for her hug and her squeeze.

The people pass by and the good ones don't cry,
For they want to be picked out and go,
To the happy land where with curls in their hair,
The Stork will soon take them they know.

TELL ME TRUE.

Say, little laddie, with eyes so brown,
Do you know the way to Grown-up Town?
Did a lassie pass with eyes of blue,
On the hillside there as you came through?
Did she wear a hood and silken gown,
And smile at you on your way to town?

Did a fairy 'way up overhead,
Whisper your name and tell her 'twas Ned?
Did you drop your top and leave your ball,
As you felt yourself grow very tall?
Dear little laddie, now tell me true,
Isn't this really what came to you?

Dear little woman with longing eyes,
Have you found the joys so many prize?
Tell me, oh man, on life's weary way,
What is the wish of your heart this day?
Of all the jewels that earth counts best,
Which in your hands will now stand the test?

Would you enter the city of fame,
And leave behind the grief and the shame?
Or run as a child with happy heart,
Once more on the hills and fields apart?
Oh, tell me, weary women and men,
If you could, would you be a child again?

APRIL

Get your bonnet little Rosie,
And your basket, baby May;
Come, while sunkissed raindrops sparkle
On the hillside far away.
While the air blows sweet and mellow,
Wafted from the ethereal blue;
Shall we not its footsteps follow,
And the bluebells gather too?

For the Springtime calls from valley,
Clad in purple, yellow, green;
And the stately Easter lily,
Takes her place a very queen.
Tulip sweet, and crocus peeping,
Show their heads above the ground;
Just to see if we are list'ning
For sweet April's merry sound.

All the orchards' now in flower,
Since fair April came to woo;
And the peach-tree seems a bower,
Fitting place for maids like you.
Plum and apple, quince and cherry,
Fill the air with fragrance rare;
For all nature now makes merry,
Springtime blossoms everywhere.

So, gather posies, little Rosie,
Fill your basket, baby May;
With the violets by the brookside,
As we pass along our way.
For hark, the South wind is calling,
And the summer now is near;
In the garden robins' calling,
For sweet April now is here.

WOULD HE WERE MINE.

Just over the way there's a little house,
  Where a baby plays all day;
In the window he sits still as a mouse,
  As I pass along my way.

He smiles as he sees me across the street,
  And waves his small hands to me;
A kiss he soon sends as a way to greet
  The friend he thinks me to be.

He holds up a book and now a small toy,
  And his face beams with delight;
He is some mother's help, somebody's joy,
  And she loves him with all her might.

This dear little baby, so fair and so small,
  Will never know all I miss,
Of the joy which heaven gives to us all,
  With the first sweet baby kiss.

His happy smile has shown me what I've lacked,
  By his actions seed was sown;
My all I would give just once to be smacked,
  By a tow-head all my own.

THE GOLD OF AUTUMN.

In Autumn skies now fades the light
  The sunset gun, too, loudly booms;
And o'er the fields and hills so bright,
  A golden beauty shines and blooms.

Stars shine down in the waning light,
  On swaying, waving goldenrod;
Where falls the gath'ring shades of night,
  As gently in the air they nod.

Upon the mantle in the hall;
  In vases in t
Behind the pictures on the wall;
  And on window-seat the blossoms wait.

The meadow sweet like new mown hay,
  The mountain path o'er which you roam;
At early dawn or close of day,
  Both do their share to deck your home.

Why then be poor, when o'er the land,
  Such splendor in the valleys nod?
When 'round about on ev'ry hand
  Are waving plumes of goldenrod.

MY SWEETHEART OF LONG AGO.

The wind is stirring in the tree-tops,
And the leaves rustle on the vine;
The lark soars high in the heavens,
As for the long summer days I pine.
For somehow, the Spring's lost it's sweetness,
And feathery and white falls the snow;
As in memory's mirror I picture
The sweetheart I loved long ago.

Earth's cares and its troubles come to me,
But their shadows will soon fade away;
For a picture rises before me,
Of one beautiful, bright, July day.
The roses that bloomed in her cheeks then,
All have faded like last winter's snow;
But in mem'ry's mirror is reflected
The sweetheart I loved long ago.

Robin whistles soft to the bluebird,
And frequently I hear the birds sing;
For now cold winter's passed o'er us,
And all nature welcomes glad spring.
Violets and Crosus come peeping,
From out their warm coverlet of snow;
As in mem'ry's mirror I see them,
And my sweetheart I loved long ago.

So I sit by my hearth and wonder,
As she looks from her home in the skies;
If she knows of the form which so often
Arises before my blurred eyes.
By the firelight I dream and ponder,
Contented and sure she must know;
And mem'ry's mirror reflects again
The sweet heart I loved long ago.

FAME'S FLOWER.

I sought it before the music of Spring was heard,
When soft and sweet was the note of each merry bird;
I climbed to the top of the distant mountain slope,
And happy was I, for my heart was filled with hope.

I sat, one summer day, in a shady bower;
Having searched from Spring till then for that rare flower;
The sun shone down as tho' anxious to do his best,
But cast no warning shadow either in East or West.

Still in October's glory I hunted o'er the ground,
But not with the hope of Spring nor its merry sound;
In the evening gloaming I questioned the still air,
Being weary with my searching, almost in despair.

And while fame's flower I sought in rain and heat,
I looked not on the beauty I trod 'neath my feet;
For the fairest flower is the one nearest your hand,
And its perfume, contentment, the rarest in the land.

AN OLD SWEETHEART OF MINE.

She was the sweetest, gentlest maid,
  That lived in any town;
The rose's blush was on her cheek,
  Her eyes, the softest brown.
Her hair with wavy ringlets fell,
  Above her placid brow;
And when she smiled at me I said,
  "Who is my sweetheart, now?"

We sat one sunny day in June,
  Beneath a chestnut tree;
And as my arm slipped 'round her neck
  I kissed her, one, two, three.
Her merry eyes she raised to mine,
  And turned her curley head. Then,
As she 'peared not to object,
  I took them back again.

Long years ago was that sweet day,
  But, ah, I love her yet;
My sweetheart with those dear brown eyes,
  I never shall forget;
I would not want a better friend,
  Nor change her for another;
Her love for me is just as true,
  For she's my own dear mother.

MY LADY'S GARDEN

There's a dear little garden, a sweet little garden,
That I pass on my way to the town.
It is full of sweet posies, and early blush roses,
And fair flowers of world-wide renown.
Bluebells and potatoes,
And pinks and tomatoes,
Are some of these things of renown.

Now I saw in that garden, that sweet little garden,
A dear little flaxen-haired maid;
With a face like the dawn of an early June morn,
When the dust by a shower is laid;
She was straight and was tall,
Fairest flower of all,
This dear little flaxen-haired maid.

Oh that sweet little garden, my heart's in that garden,
For I heard it go thump as I passed;
It's amid the red roses, cowslips and pink posies,
For the dear little maid holds it fast.
Mignonette and heart's ease,
Lilies white, and sweet peas,
But the fairest of all holds it fast.

JUNE.

Dearest, the rose is blooming on the vine,
  Summer is here once more;
The merry birds are singing songs like thine,
  Outside my cottage door.
My heart with joy beats time to ev'ry tune,
  And ev'ry note rings true;
For is not this the merry month of June,
  That brings me, love, to you?

Dearest, the grain is waving on the hill,
  Dew-sparkled in the dawn;
And the brook flows gently down by the mill,
  Where we walked that happy morn.
The whole wide world with joy doth outward
      fling,
  It's mirth and beauty too,
The bud on bush, the breath and hope of Spring,
  In honor, love, of you.

Dearest, 'tis the time for which I've waited long,
  When larks begin to soar;
The mating time, now winter's snows are gone,
  Has come to earth once more.
Throw open wide your casement and your heart,
  And let the bluebird, too,
We love each other, and never more shall part,
  For I welcome June and you.

LOVE THAT CHANGETH NOT.

The passing years
With snow may sprinkle thy brown hair;
And sorrows mark
Leave trace upon thy cheek so fair;
Thine eyes so blue,
That sparkle like the noon-day sun,
With grief may fade,
And sorrow wring thy heart, dear one.
Our path's ne'er cross
In early morn or twilight gray,
But thy heart, dear,
It's loveliness will keep alway.

HOMESICK.

The daisy fields I long to see,
Once more in the summer weather;
And hear the bob-o-link's shrill call,
While dew sparkles on the heather.

The soft sweet wind I long to feel,
Fall gently on my check and brow;
And pluck the purple violets sweet,
From mossy banks where their heads bow.

The hollow roar I long to hear,
That comes from out the busy world;
Where strength meets strength and man is King,
And failure must be backward hurled.

But most of all I long to see
Within that sheltered haven—home;
My mother's face smile back at me,
And then, ah then, no more I'll roam.

NIDDYNOD LAND.

I will tell you a tale of the Niddynod Land,
Little Susie has been there I know;
Where the queer little people have humps on their backs,
And the trolley cars run on the funniest tracks,
And the dickey-birds fly to and fro.

In this wonderful land which is fairest by night,
For the Brownies can tell this is so;
There are little toy men made of chocolate cream,
Pink soda-water flows in a beautiful stream,
And the babies they laugh and they crow.

It's the funniest thing in this Niddynod place,
Little girls all have white fluffy wings;
And a boy will dash by on a thoroughbred steed,
Not think of the danger of such violent speed,
While the wise children play in the swings.

Some sit on the shore of this Niddynod town,
And dig in the sweet, sugary sand;
For the white creamy milk soon in tiny streams flows,
And the soft gentle breeze smells sweet as it blows,
For sugar-plums grow wild in that land.

In this wonderful, marvelous, mysterious place,
Are some things I don't quite understand;
For they tell me that children when older they grow
Are none of them wiser for the less than they know,
Of the beauties that grow in that land.

Get aboard of the train for that beautiful town,
To the Niddynod country away;
For time passes by and you will soon be to wise,
To go to the place where the sweet popcorn flake
flies,
Then play in that land while you may.

EASTER.

The winter was dreary,
Was dark and was long;
But this bright Easter morning
Earth sings her glad song.
It sang at my window
At dawning of day,
And gladness came in
With the passing of grey.
So I send you in greeting
This message of cheer,
"Whatever the sorrow or blight of the year,
Whatever the error, whatever the fear,
Were you lost in the darkness or on the highway,
Drear winter leads on to the bright Easter day,
And Easter is here.

AN EASTER MORN.

The Syrian sun was sinking low,
O'er proud and great Jerusalem the fair;
The slowly rising moon outshines the stars,
Upon a peaceful hillside there.
The mystery of the Oriental night,
Rests on olive orchards like a spell,
And music of the gently moving trees,
Falls on the ear like some sweet toned bell.

High on a hill the holy temple stood.
Above the city there—exceeding white;
And from it men and women homeward went,
Upon that fateful Passover night.
Behind that motley crowd a woman walked,
With veil, and robe, and wimple torn away;
Footsore and weary she had travelled far,
All through that hot, long and dusty day.

Could this be Mary of the long ago,
Who rested in Bethlehem's fair town,
And held that little babe in arms of love,
Whose coming brought heaven's angels down?
Was this the mother of that little one,
Whose advent brought the weary world good cheer?
And could it be that Mary's little Son,
Was doomed to die, and death so near?

No this was Mary called the Magdalene,
Who walked in sorrow with hand upon her
breast.
Deaf to the taunting jeers and mockery,
Longing but for shelter and for rest.
Her thoughts were of the man who once had said
In that temple white to those who came to slur,
"He that among you hath not already sinned,
Let him first cast a stone at her."

Then stooping, had written upon the ground
While slunk the Scribes and Pharisees away;
And lo, when He and she had turned around,
No one was there to answer them "Nay."
Could she forget the accents of that voice,
The pity and compassion of His eye,
When He said, so low it made her heart rejoice,
"As they condemn thee not, so do not I."

So 'long the crowded road she swiftly passed,
With low-bowed head and tottering gait;
To where three crosses on a hillside stood,
Her only fear was, she might be late.
Up, up the steep and rough and winding way,
Nor stopped for shelter from the dews of night;
'Til near the top-the road turned sharply off,—
A scene of wondrous beauty met her sight.

The Eastern sun bathed hills that rolled away,
Showing Mt. Moriah in the dawning light;
And one rough cross now lay upon the ground,
Revealed by slowly passing shades of night.
Across her path before her came a man,
Whose face and form was bathed in holy light.
And straight unto His feet she quickly ran,—
She had seen her Lord—in all His might.

With head upraised and trembling hand outstretched,
He called her,—not by that awful name,
But by a sweeter word she e'er had heard,
Which fell upon her soul like gentle rain.
He bade her look upon His hands and side,
And see the nail prints in His wounded feet;
For 'twas for such as she that He had died,
His sacrifice then might be complete.

Oh, joy of the Resurrection morning,
Let heaven all her joy bells now ring.
For Christ the Immaculate has conquered,
And Mary now hails Him as King.
Oh, let all the sad-hearted take comfort,
Glad hallelujahs ascend to the sky,
For all nature now gives a welcome to
Bright Easter that shall nevermore die.

COMRADE OF MINE.

Though far apart, I send my love
To you I hold so dear,
Wishing you all happiness,
When freedom's day draws near.
Would I could send you power
That nothing could overthrow,
To smile, to laugh, to conquer,
As on thro' life you go.
There are many other things,
But I'll say, "God-speed" instead,
And clasp your hand, you'll understand,
The wishes I've left unsaid.

THE CHRISTMAS GUEST.

Oh, Christmas, merry Christmas, are you
really here once more,
We hear your joy bells pealing, as you knock
upon our door;
Like little feathers, soft and white, above us in
the sky,
The fleecy clouds in frosty light are swiftly glid-
ing by.
We listen in the twilight to the bells "across the
snow,"
And think of that first Christmas night cen-
turies ago.

In a stable where the oxen on the straw had
made their bed,
There the little Christ Child Jesus, pillowed, too,
His baby head;
While His mother, gentle Mary, as she prayed
for heav'nly grace,
Knelt, and worshipped with the wise men, laid
her check against His face;
And I love to think that Jesus smiled up in that
happy face,
For beyond her in the distance He could see
the human race.

The shepherds slept, and night in mighty
majesty rode on,
While angel voices chanted soft until the rosy
dawn;
That glad and wondrous story of peace on
earth to men,

And down thro' all the ages we hear its chant again.
And Jesus in the manger slept upon the scented hay,
For Love Himself Incarnate came to earth that Christmas day.

In that far eastern country, in the twilight long ago,
Did the little boy, Jesus, hear the bells across the snow;
Did He whisper to His playmates when another used Him ill,
That sweet song the angels sang of glad tidings of good will?
If any had a quarrel refused the friendly word to say,
Did the Christ Child bid him think of the meaning of this day?

Did His mother when at eve, laid He down His curly head,
Kiss, and fold the clothes o'er Him, as she tucked Him into bed?
Did He pray, "Forgive us Lord," as do we, both big and small,
"Bless us, Father, up in heaven, bless the humblest of us all?
Did His voice join with the harpers in the song we sing today,
"Glory in the highest, glory," on this merry Christmas day?

Oh, ye who have scorned each other by either
word or deed,
Have hurt the one that loved you and made a
fond heart bleed,
Forget the strife and friction in this old, fast
fading year,
And injured friend or brother greet as Christ-
mas draweth near;
Oh ye, who nourish sadness, and hope seems
far away,
Remember that the Savior came to earth on
Christmas day.

Oh, ring merry bells at even, ring merry bells
at morn,
Sing His praise ev'ry nation, unto you a king is
born;
For of all the gifts that Christmas brings, the
fairest, the best,
Is the Christ Child, the Saviour, waiting now
to be your quest.
Hear Him knocking at your door, open wide and
bid Him stay,
Then join your happy song with ours this
merry Christmas day.

I WILL NOT FAIL YOU.

I stood beside my casement in the middle of the night,
The moon rays shed upon the earth a light both clear and white,
And far off in the distance, in memory's mind I saw
A grim and silent fortress holding men within the law.

The trees waved gently to and fro in the clear moonlit night;
But 'twas another scene than this that rose before my sight.
I saw a dim and narrow cell, a cot beside the door,
And on his knees, a man knelt in agony on the floor.

The soft and scented night air seemed filled with freedom's glad sound,
A million insect voices seemed to whisper from the ground.
But in that cell of loneliness, of sorrow and of dread,
A wail went up to heaven for the man wished he were dead.

I pushed aside my curtain in the middle of the night,
And gazed with tear filled eyes at the stars that shone so bright;
Then with loving heart this message sent across the space so wide,
To the narrow, dim cell where was the man who wished he'd died.

"I will not fail you though weary months must past before
You step a stronger and braver man thro' freedom's glad door;
I believe in you and trust you, and know you will not fail,
And will be the first to greet you when you leave that stony jail.

And as I stood in silent awe beside my window there,
Suddenly upon my knees I dropped in grateful prayer;
For my comrades in the fortress He had given to me,
And the vision at midnight He had caused my eyes to see.

I stood beside my window in the middle of the night,
Again, another vision burst upon my eager sight.
'Twas a band of brave and earnest men, their faces seamed with care,
For Hope's bright star shone o'er them in damp dungeons seated there.

And as I looked the world shone bright with
gleams from heav'n above,
And all about seemed to speak of the greatness
of God's love,
Then quietly I crept once more into my bed so
near,
And fell asleep praying for the comrades I hold
dear.

MARY'S LITTLE SON.

"And His name shall be called Emanuel, for He shall save His People from their sins."

In quaint and quiet Bethlehem, ah, many years ago,
Was born a little stranger whose name I think you know.
And 'mid the skies' deep blue above one star shone clear and bright,
A holy stillness reigned o'er all that blessed Christmas night.

How swiftly and how silently the news soon spread abroad.
That Mary's little son was born, which was the Christ, the Lord.
She kissed His baby face and hands with sad and tear-dimmed eye,
For in the distant years to come, she knew how He would die.

And I wonder if He wondered in His own sweet baby way,
What the place was He had come to on that gladsome Christmas day?
Did He gaze and look about Him, hear the flutter of the wings
And the grand melodious music as the angel choir sings?

Did He know that hearts with sorrow would
listen for His voice?
As Mary did that happy night; oh, how she did
rejoice!
He came to be the bearer of good news unto men,
And as He was so long ago, is now, as He was
then.

Did he put His little hands up and clasped, like
you and I,
And pray His Father up in heaven to bless nor
pass Him by?
Did then God's Holy Presence come down to
dwell in Him,
And silently give power to cast out any sin?

I like to think that He grew then like all our
little boys,
And played with wooden horse and whip and
all his other toys.
And as he came to man's estate the wondrous gift
was given,
For Love came into human hearts, God's bless-
ing from high heaven.

Oh, come then Mary's Little Son, descend on
us today;
Bring peace and love to all our hearts, grant
this, dear Lord, we pray.
And when our merry Christmas bells their glad
sweet tidings tell,
Come in our hearts, bid sin depart, dear Christ,
Emanuel.

THE PICTURE ON THE WALL.

Thy thoughtful eyes look down on me
  As here I sit alone;
And wonder if my thoughts of thee
  Find echo in thine own.
Or if our spirits ever roam
  Beyond our present sight,
Thine from thy far-off home of stone,
  Mine here, this starry night.

I know thou often think'st of me
  In my happy home so dear;
And wish that it thou soon could see
  While falls the quiet tear.
But think not thou art all forgot,
  No, that could never be;
For happy yet shall be they lot
  With children round thy knee.

I know that thou hast borne a cross,
  To sadden thy young heart.
But, I, too, suffered, had my loss,
  From loved ones had to part.
But soon new cares, new hopes and fears
  Thy days and nights will fill;
But thro' that time and all the years
  I shall be faithful still.

What though thou'rt distant from my sight?
I know thou'rt sometimes here,
And in the still hours of the night,
I wake and feel thee near.
And though thy picture on the wall
Whispers softly now to me,
Thy spirit always heeds the call,
Whene'er I think of thee.

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